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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the beliefs about second language learning held by two populations of students of Arabic at the University of Wisconsin: 17 students studying first-semester Arabic in a campus classroom, and 6 students studying the same curriculum through a correspondence course. The subjects were of widely varying backgrounds, and some demographic differences were found in the two groups. A 47-item Likert-type scale was administered to identify language and language learning attitudes. Results indicate that some differences in beliefs about language learning exist between the two groups in question. Implications for curriculum and instruction are explored briefly. The instrument used in the study is appended. (Contains 27 references.) (MSE)

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ED 432 146

STUDENTS OF ARABIC

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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Abstract

This paper focuses on an application of distance education. It investigates the beliefs about language learning held by students of Arabic who are studying in the United States. Based in part upon the research design and instrument (BALLI) of Elaine Horwitz (University of Texas-Austin), this paper includes the results from students of first semester Arabic studying in a classroom, on-campus course with those from off-campus students utilizing a correspondence course. This research identifies students' most strongly rated beliefs.

Findings of this study provide evidence that, in the case of this small sample, on-campus and off-campus students of Arabic do hold beliefs concerning language learning that differ. These results may influence instruction techniques, curriculum design, evaluations, and articulation procedures between institutions.

STUDENTS OF ARABIC

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The popularity of distance-delivered courses has grown during this century. Language courses are now available via satellite, cable, compressed video, audio-graphics, and WEB among other media (Fast, 1998). However, the correspondence course as a form of distance education has flourished at the University of Wisconsin (Wisconsin) since the late 1890s. After one hundred years, Wisconsin's Extension campus offers over 550 courses of which 15 languages have a prominent place among the credit courses.[1] Arabic (Modern Standard) is one of the most recent languages added to the catalog.

This study examines beliefs held by students of Arabic who study at Wisconsin, a Higher Education Act (HEA), Title VI federally-funded research institution. More specifically, this study juxtaposes beliefs of students who study Arabic daily in an on-campus setting with those students who study Arabic independently in an off-campus, correspondence setting. This paper identifies certain priorities in their beliefs, describes effects that such beliefs may have on language learning, and suggests beliefs that promote language proficiency. The *Kuntz-Rifkin Instrument* (KRI) (Kuntz, 1996) utilized in this research is expanded from Horwitz's (1988) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI). The research question is:

1. What are the strongly rated statements about language learning held by first semester students of Arabic who are studying in a class setting and those of students studying by correspondence?

This article describes belief theory, summarizes the instructional situation for each sample, outlines the method of research, discusses the results, and ends with implications.

Beliefs and Literature Review

The concept of belief emerges from a body of literature that goes back two decades. For the most part, this literature presents students' views about language learning at the post-secondary level. For this study, "beliefs" are defined as notions about language learning that students have acquired before receiving instruction. Such beliefs reflect confidence in students' ability to learn a language and the procedures necessary to acquire fluency in a language.

Language learning belief research.

In the past, foreign language researchers (Horwitz, 1989; Kern, 1995; Tumposky, 1991) identified beliefs about language learning held by students of U.S. commonly taught languages (CTLs = French, German, and Spanish). Their results suggest that such assumed beliefs may be erroneous or even detrimental to learning (Horwitz, 1988). However, in the previous studies, these researchers did not examine the different responses for statements as reported by students studying a language in a classroom setting and an off-campus setting (distance-delivered). Therefore, identifying student beliefs may enable teachers to devise learning strategies that support or correct beliefs, improve student proficiency, and redesign programs.

History of Arabic Instruction.

The history of Arabic instruction at Wisconsin is a two-prong endeavor. Menahem Mansoor (Egyptian) founded the Arabic programs at the University of Wisconsin. In 1955, the Wisconsin Jewish Committee collected $75,000 in donations to fund a professorship and to create a Department of Hebrew Studies (Cronon & Jenkins, 1999; Rupp, 1987). The committee hired Mansoor to teach not only Hebrew but also Arabic which included several levels of instruction for classical and colloquial Arabic (Mansoor 1971, 1972). In 1972, after several years of negotiation, the Dean of the College of Letters and Science approved the transfer of Arabic instructional responsibilities to the Department of African Languages and Literature. Thus, Arabic became a regularly offered African language and part of the African Studies Program (Curtin, 1975; Hayward, 1983).

Wisconsin's Department of African Languages and Literature presently offers three levels of Modern Standard Arabic instruction. This program comprises one professor and a teaching assistant (TA) who teach about 40 students annually. Students who wish to continue their studies of Arabic may do so at the discretion of the professor as an independent study course. The textbooks have changed over the years in line with changing theories of language instruction. Many of the advanced-level students study Arabic abroad during the summer with USED - HEA Title VI fellowship funding or at state-side immersion/intensive

language programs. The cost of Arabic instruction remains high (Hayward & Beckett, 1978).

Following his retirement, Mansoor organized a two-semester Arabic program through the University of Wisconsin Extension, Letters and Science Division (Wineke, 1998). He, with assistance from younger native-speakers, wrote a first-semester textbook and recorded a cassette tape to supplement the first 16 lessons. He designed the second semester course with a syllabus to focus on important grammar points that were presented in a popular textbook.

Over 200 students have enrolled in the correspondence courses since 1986. However, few students have completed the second semester course. Although students receive a year to complete a semester course, some students find it necessary to request additional time to complete a course. Between 1991 and 1998, 147 students enrolled in the first semester course. Fourteen students officially withdrew and 33 students completed the course. These first semester students included 30 students from the state of Wisconsin, 107 students from other states, and 10 resident in countries other than the U.S.[2] Presently, there are 12 students enrolled in the first semester course of which four are from Wisconsin and one out-of-state student is enrolled in the second semester course. The second semester is being phased out of service. Student backgrounds range from retired citizens interested in languages and foreign service spouse to heritage learners and incarcerated Muslims converts.[3]

Method

The author and colleague designed the survey to identify beliefs of adults. The KRI comprised five demographic statements in addition to 47 statements designed in a Likert 5-scale, closed-ended format. This scale measured the strength of student agreement with each statement. For purposes of data analysis, a student choice was equated to numbers as follows:

(a) strongly agree	=	1
(b) agree	=	2
(c) neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	=	3
(d) disagree	=	4
(e) strongly disagree	=	5

The sample comprised students enrolled in Arabic at the Wisconsin: a residential campus and the extension campus. Courses at both campuses could fulfill undergraduate language requirements. In 1992 and 1998, teachers of first-semester, first-year Arabic administered the survey during the first week of instruction. Sampling consisted of 17 on-campus students and 6 off-campus students.[4]

Statistical analyses comprised descriptive techniques (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) to match the procedures done by other researchers (Horwitz 1988, Kern 1995, Tumposky 1991). Because the both sample sizes were small and unequal, the author decided not to conduct inferential (non-parametric) statistic to determine significant differences.

The demographic data showed some differences (Table 1). For example, students who studied at a distance tended to be older,

females students. These women tended to be married to Arab-Americans, worked, or planned to work in an Arab country.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics for Students of Arabic at UW-Madison and UW-Extension Programs

Institutions Sample size	On-C. N=17	Off N=6
C. Sex (males)	53%	33%
Sex (females)	46%	66%
D. Age (18-22 years)	81%	17%
Age (26+ years)	0%	83%
E. Previous study of ARABIC	19%	0%
F. Previous study of any language	94%	80%

Results

Results from the students of Arabic in class, on-campus and those of correspondence, off-campus reveal some differences.

1. *What are the strongly rated statements about language learning held by first semester students of Arabic who are studying in a class setting and those of students studying by correspondence?*

Responses greater than 50% from both instructional settings yielded polarities within the AGREEMENT and DISAGREEMENT categories (Table 2). From this sample, responses showed that students concurred on 26 statements (55% of survey). The majority of students agreed with 18 statements and the majority of students disagreed with 8 statements.

AGREEMENT.

Of the statements showing agreement, results from students who study on-campus showed a greater percentage for 11 statements than that was reported by off-campus students. However, responses from on-campus and off-campus students for

four of these statements were substantially different (greater than 20 point spread): (23) "If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it," (6) "I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well," (1) "It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language," and (3) "Some languages are easier to learn than others." A fifth statement (13) "It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language" only showed a strong agreement for the on-campus students.

DISAGREEMENT.

In contrast, the majority of students on-campus and off-campus reported disagreement for eight statements. Moreover, responses for three of these statements were substantially different: (35) "In order to read something in a foreign language, you have to know all the words," (38) "I have distant ancestors who spoke this language," and (42) "I need to fulfill a foreign language requirement for graduation." Finally, with non-concurring response, on-campus students reported substantially greater disagreement than off-campus student for two statements: (30) "Americans think that it is important to speak a foreign language" and (24) "It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language." On the other hand, off-campus students reported a substantially greater disagreement than did the on-campus students for (43) "I am studying this FL to qualify for a fellowship (HEA Title VI) or some kind of funding for my education."

Table 2 Responses for Statements from Students of ARABIC (> 50%)

Institutions	On-C	Off	
Sample size	N=17	N=6	
AGREEMENT			
17-Important to repeat & practice	100%	83%	+
23-Knowing FL will bring job opportunities	**94%**	**66%**	+
6-Will learn this FL very well	**94%**	**66%**	+
25-Learning FL differs from other subjects	88%	83%	
1-Child learn FL better than adults	**88%**	**66%**	+
41-Interested in econ/pol. of country	85%	83%	
40-Interested in culture of people	85%	83%	
*4-This FL is difficult to learn	82%	83%	
11-Better to learn FL in country of FL	82%	80%	
3-Some FL easier to learn than others	**77%**	**100%**	-
34-Everyone can learn a FL	77%	66%	+
46-Plan to travel to country of FL	77%	83%	
31-Learning FL to know FL speakers	77%	66%	+
39-FL will be helpful to me professionally	69%	66%	
15-I have FL aptitude	65%	66%	
8-Necessary to know FL culture to speak FL	65%	66%	
7-Important to speak FL with excellent accent	59%	66%	
10-It easier to learn FL2 if learned FL	53%	66%	-
***			
13-It's OK to guess the meaning of a word	**88%**		+
27-Speaking this FL will help get a job	69%		+
12-I would try to practice FL language	65%		+
2-Some people born with special FL ability	59%		+
21-It is important to practice in Lang. Lab.	59%		+
*47-Goal is to function as a native speaker	54%		
*14-It takes about 3-5 years to learn a FL		66%	-
DISAGREEMENT			
9-Do not speak until correct	100%	83%	+
5-FL structured in same way as English	88%	100%	-
26-Learning FL is translating from English	88%	83%	
36-To listen in FL, must know all words	85%	100%	-
35-To read in FL, must know all words	**77%**	**100%**	-
38-I have ancestors who spoke this FL	**69%**	**100%**	-
42-I need to fulfill FL requirement	**62%**	**83%**	-
20-Learning FL is learning grammar	53%	66%	-
***			
30-US believe: It is important to speak a FL	**77%**		+
24-It is easier to speak than understand FL	**71%**		+
33-Americans are good at learning FLs	70%		+
22-Women better than men at learning FL	62%		+
19-Mistakes are hard to get rid of	53%		
43-Studying this FL to qualify for funding		**83%**	-
16-Learning a FL is learning vocabulary		66%	-

*4, 14, 47 = specific answers
[+] and [-] = response percent differs more than 10%

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Discussion

This section addresses important statements to which the students responded strongly. It also describes the substantial differences between the responses from students of the two institutional settings. Finally, it ends with pedagogical suggestions.

AGREEMENT.

Responses from the on-campus or off-campus students showed that they agreed with 18 statements (Table 2). Responses yield three general situations: general agreement, students of Arabic, and off-campus students of Arabic.

1. General student agreement. All these students, like other adult students of the commonly taught languages (CTL) (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Tumposky 1991) and LCTLs (Al-Abed Al-Haq, 1999; Kuntz, 1996) agreement with (17) "It is important to repeat and practice a lot." These students seem to recognize that "time on task" is critical for learning. In fact, some students having a "mastery" learning style or a "musical" intelligence may become uncomfortable if their instructor does not create a variety of drills or exercises for practice, such as a Gouin series or a rap song.[5] This finding may suggest the need for instructors to use strategies from the audio-lingual method, such as oral repetition, pattern practices, and auditory discrimination. Instructors may also find that their students appreciate frequent use of "classroom assessment techniques" to evaluate their progress such as chain notes, pro and con grid,

memory matrix, or diagnostic learning logs (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

The off-campus students reported a lower percent than their counterparts studying languages on-campus in a classroom setting with an "in-your-face teacher." This response by off-campus students may reflect their difficulty or frustration in creating practice session on their own. The off-campus teacher can only make suggestions for additional practice activities to those exercises in the textbook. Furthermore, without a peer, the off-campus students have no reference point for which to judge their progress. To compensate for off-campus students' insufficient practice, off-campus instructors often permit students to resubmit lessons for reassessment. However, this offer does not assure off-campus students will fully understand their corrections of errors.

In addition, responses to a statement concerning language learning indicated a consensus of these off-campus students with on-campus students of this study and of other studies (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Kuntz, 1996). Because of the need for different metacognitive activities in the first-semester course, students agreed strongly with (25) "Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects." On-campus students accustomed to lectures or general discussion may find that oral participation, pair work, daily homework, and weekly assessments require a different set of study strategies. Off-campus students may have found that the distance-delivered course

required self-discipline and goal setting not as critical in a teacher-directed, on-campus course.

On- and off-campus teachers and students may wish to share ideas concerning successful ways of teaching and learning a language. Together they can collaborate on making the most from language activities by conducting action research. Some of the research variables might include students writing a learning log (time on task), completing a self-confidence surveys, or preparing a knowledge/skills checklist (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

Nevertheless, students of all languages agreed with statement (34) "Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language." This finding is interesting since the off-campus students who study only reading and writing skills at the same time agree that everyone can learn to "speak" a foreign language. This result appears to endorse national and state legislation to mandate foreign language instruction at the precollegiate level.[6]

2. Students of Arabic. A set of statements yielded similar responses for students of Arabic regardless of instructional setting. However, these responses showed greater agreement for students of Arabic than from students who study CTLs on-campus. For instance, these students of Arabic indicated strong agreement for statement (40) "I am interested in the culture of the people who speak this language." This response may suggest that students of Arabic unlike those of French, German, or Spanish know little about their targeted culture.

Moreover, the students may view the language class as a cultural forum as well as language-learning opportunity.

The common response to (40) reinforces the current focus on integrating culture into daily lessons (Kramsch, 1993). However, Kramsch has found that deep structures of culture are rarely addressed in the United States as previously recommended (ACTFL, 1995). Issues such as cultural intent of statement, strategies for active listening, contextualized materials, and challenged ethnocentric views appear lacking in U.S. classrooms and particularly in distance-designed materials.

Linked with students' of Arabic interest of culture is their agreement for statement (41) "I am interested in the politics and/or economic systems of the country where this language is spoken." Familiarity with the economy, politics, and culture of the target language is a critical motivation for the on-campus and off-campus students to study Arabic regardless of the setting. Teachers might try to develop student knowledge in using varied learning strategies that include both non-verbal and verbal communication. More specifically, teachers may wish to focus on Islam as a political as well as religious component of language study.[7] Recently, various public and private organizations have offered funding specifically to teachers of Arabic for the development of materials that incorporate multiple regions and focus on business.

Likewise, the majority of the off-campus students also responded strongly to (11) "It is better to learn a foreign

language in the foreign country." Since these students of Arabic indicated that they would learn more language or more efficiently in the target language country, this information may explain why these students may not feel adequately trained even by native-speakers in the United States. Perhaps, to compensate for a dearth of authentic language content about the target culture in U.S. textbooks, these students recognize that they need to have additional contact with people and culture events in order to develop an appropriate Arabic proficiency.

Not only did the majority of students of Arabic claim that it was better to study in a target-language country rather than in the United States, they also reported a strong aspiration to travel -- (46) "I plan to travel to a country where this language is spoken." To profit from their beliefs in the value of overseas studies, students need to know how to interpret appropriately what they may experience and how to interact with experiences that are important and relevant to the culture (Smadi & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 1998). Teachers may seek to create role plays, pantomimes, drawing, or culture capsules to focus on various Arabic practices to compare with those of the United States.

Finally, responses from students of Arabic indicated agreement for statement (4) "The language I am trying to learn is difficulty to learn." Indeed for a U.S., native English-speaker, learning Arabic script, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and culture may seem a monumental task. This language is "totally different" from English since it has few visual (script) or

auditory (pronunciation) clues and few cognates (vocabulary). As a result, students may find that they need to practice writing the Arabic alphabet as single letters and connecting ones. Students may wish to create a set of vocabulary or picture cards. After or while reading a story, students may find that drawing pictures of the major actions helps them retain new vocabulary. As an alternative, students might imagine themselves as a character in the story.

3. Off-campus students of Arabic. In contrast to the on-campus students (including students of CTLs and LCTLs), off-campus students responded with substantial less agreement than did the on-campus students. For example, they reported a weak agreement for statement (1) "It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language." This response may reflect students who had an unsuccessful experience or no language courses at the pre-collegiate level. Although these older adult students may feel motivated, their responses showed a realistic attitude about learning Arabic. Ironically, research and anecdotes do support the fact that adults can learn another language and succeed in areas of grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, reading, and cultural sensitivity. The findings of current research on language acquisition such as brain development and lateralization are fairly common knowledge. Students in this study may have had some contact with this research which focuses on the pronunciation proficiency (Krashen et al., 1982).

Likewise, responses from off-campus students showed substantial less agreement than on-campus students with statement (6) "I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well." This response was similar to those from on-campus students of the CTLs and most LCTLs (not Arabic) (Kuntz, 1995). These students may actually have a more pragmatic view of the time involved in acquiring an employable proficiency. Since distance-delivered instruction focuses on elementary reading and writing, it is understandable that off-campus students would not anticipate acquiring an oral or aural proficiency in Arabic. Presently, the off-campus course includes a cassette tape of the first 16 lessons concerning pronunciation of the alphabet. Because many off-campus students actually wish to speak Arabic, the lack of audio tapes or videos for the off-campus students is a common complaint.[8] Teachers of both sets of students need to help students set realistic goals.

A third difference in responses for agreement concerned the potential of employment. The off-campus students were not as positive as those from on-campus course as evident by (23) "If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it." The off-campus program provides only two semesters of instruction while the on-campus program offers a six-semester program. Consequently, the on-campus students has a possibility of gaining intermediate to advanced-level fluency. In addition, on-campus student may participate in extra-

curricular activities (language table, films, tutors) which might help to improve their language fluency.

Unlike the on-campus students of Arabic, off-campus students reported no majority agreement for statement (13) "It's OK to guess if you don't now a word in the foreign language." With few resources and no visual organizers in their textbook to provide a clue to meaning, off-campus students prefer not to guess the meaning of words. They wish to know the meaning of all vocabulary in their dialogues and stories. Guessing the meaning of a word from context is a common strategy of good language learners. Therefore, teachers may want to encourage off-campus students risk taking by guessing meaning. Furthermore, a textbook glossary rarely provides a full listing of derived words from a verbal root.

Finally, the off-campus students in contrast to the on-campus ones reported total agreement for statement (3) "Some languages are easier to learn than others." Indeed, this statement is true. Consequently, students need to be aware that the time need to learn a language is in proportion to its difficulty. Arabic, as found by the U.S. Foreign Service Institute staff who teach motivated, English-speaking adult employees, is one of the most difficult languages.[9]

DISAGREEMENT.

Responses from these students of Arabic showed common disagreement for eight statements (Table 2). Like the responses for agreement, these responses yield three general situations:

general disagreement, students of Arabic, and off-campus students of Arabic.

1. General Student Disagreement

Regardless of the sample, adult language students (Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Kuntz, 1996; Tumposky, 1991) strongly disagreed with (9) "You shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly." This finding concurs with second language acquisition theory. Teachers who seek perfect speech only add unnecessary anxiety to the student while their proficiency is developing. Following the communicative competency methodology recommendation, teachers at HEA Title VI Centers typically stress fluency of language production at the first semester level rather than oral accuracy. These language students apparently understand that speaking with some errors is a part of the language-learning process. Moreover, it is only by speaking and then listening to rejoinders and watching reactions that students will learn the subtleties of pronunciation, intonation, stress, and colloquialisms. Talking with language buddies or participating at a language table are strategies to generate confidence in speaking. Several off-campus students have located international students or faculty from a target-language country with which to converse.

At the beginning level, these students appear to understand that it is not necessary to comprehend the meaning of each word. Therefore, they disagree with (36) "In order to listen to something in a foreign language, you have to know all words."

Rather, student become increasingly proficient by comprehending the "gist" of the text. Again this finding underscores the need to reduce the anxiety level of beginning students. Therefore, teachers encourage student to construct meaning from the text. To do this, teachers need to know how to differentiate their pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities to meet the academic and interest needs of each student.[10]

2. Students of Arabic.

In contrast to the responses from all adult students, responses from the Wisconsin students for three statement were prominent.

Students strongly disagreed with statement (26) "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English." Perhaps contributing to students' thinking in this response is the difficulty of physically writing word for word. Arabic writing beginning at the right side may force students to conceptualize the mean before writing an English translation. However, in reality few teachers utilize a translation as a prominent method of instruction. Most classes on- and off-campus are conducted in Arabic so that student will begin to think in Arabic. Teachers stress the selection of appropriate phrases based upon culture and not translation. Students might create language ladders to illustrate degrees of meaning (formal to informal) for a concept.

Students reported weak disagreement for statement (20) "Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot

of grammar rules." These students' disagreement suggests that they recognize that language acquisition is complex. Grammar rules provide a standardization for the language. When students must focus on grammar rules, they might find graphic organizers such as matrixes or grids for classification or mnemonic phrases helpful.

The response for statement (5) "The language I am trying to learn is structured in the same way as English" received disagreement designation. This result indicates that these students have some linguistic knowledge concerning Arabic. To facilitate their learning, teachers might wish to construct a matrix of comparisons between English and Arabic. For instance, the teacher might wish to illustrate the difference in sentence structure or verb-noun construction.

3. Off-campus Students of Arabic.

Responses to six statements show substantial differences in the students responses. Off-campus student report stronger disagreement than do on-campus student for four statements and less disagreement for two statements.

In contrast to the growing trend among on-campus students to enroll in Arabic to meet academic requirements, off-campus students strongly disagreed with the statements (42) "I need to fulfill a FL requirement for graduation." Few of these latter students are taking the course to fulfill an academic requirement. Instead, they are taking the course for personal interests such as heritage, Islamic conversion, or marriage

(Rouchdy, 1992). For this reason, an instructor of off-campus student would gain from information collected from an interest inventory. The off-campus student may require individualized correspondence.

Likewise, off-campus students strongly disagree with statement (43) "I am studying this language to qualify for a fellowship or some kind of funding for my education." Typically, for the off-campus students who study Arabic as an additional or supplementary course, they receive no funding to take the course. In addition, the majority of off-campus students are not enrolled in an academic degree program. Consequently, there is no academic or external motivation to complete the course. Because of this situation, teachers of off-campus students may need to be sensitive to the specific needs of each student. They also may need to be direct, but diplomatic in their comments on lessons. Being an off-campus student, it is very easy to be distracted by other duties and not complete lessons.

Unlike on-campus students, off-campus students reported strong disagreement for statement (35) "In order to read something in a foreign language, you have to know all the words." Similar for their response to statement (36) above, these off-campus students aware that context can provide meaning to unknown words. With this response, their anxiety level should be sufficiently low to enable them to peruse various types of text.

None of the off-campus students claimed to have an ancestor who spoke Arabic. Consequently, a heritage link with North

Africa or Asia seems unlikely. Without any preconceived ideas about culture and colloquials, the off-campus students may be open to new ideas about learning culture. Several of the on-campus students were of Lebanese, Syrian, or Malaysian ancestry. They often questioned the instructor concerning vocabulary that they had heard.

In contrast to students of the on-campus program, off-campus students do not study speaking and listening skills. Therefore, in this study, off-campus students, in contrast to on-campus students, reported a neutral response for statement (24) "It is easier to speak than understand a FL." Acquiring listening or speaking skills are not part of the course objectives. Consequently, the off-campus student may not know which of these oral skills are easier to learn.

Since the off-campus students are learning to read and write Arabic, they may have ambivalence about the importance of Americans to learning to speak a language. The off-campus students, in contrast to the on-campus students, reported neither agreement nor disagreement for statement (30) "Americans (U.S. citizens) think that it is important to speak a foreign language." Historically, citizens have not promoted language study at the pre-collegiate level. Consequently, foreign language instruction is not a required course of study as it is in most other countries of the world.

Limitations

Several limitations in this study need mentioning. First, the author could not control for the collection prior to the first lesson in Arabic. As a result, students may respond based upon their knowledge of the course through previous contact with the teacher or other students. Second, the sample size was small which underscores the difficulty of conducting quantitative data from LCTL students.

In the future, the teachers of Arabic might design studies differently. Teacher might seek to compare responses from students at subsequent levels of instruction and by different means of distance-delivered instruction. Athough correspondence is one methods, electronic instruction over the Internet or via compressed video is becoming a popular alternative. A cohort study would be appropriate to determine the change or modification in beliefs made by students during their entire distance-delivered language program. In addition, a survey of the instructors and administrators would enable scholars to ascertain if there are mismatches in beliefs between these educators and their respective students who participate in distance courses. These data may be critical in training teachers to use different forms of electronic technology for distance-delivered instruction.

Conclusions

As increasingly larger numbers of institutions developed distance delivered courses, research such as this pilot study will be critical for program and curriculum decisions. In general, the results from this study may be seen as support for distance-delivered language programs. Despite the small sample, this study demonstrates that some differences do exist in beliefs about language learning between students who study on-campus in classroom settings and those who study off-campus in self-directed settings. Therefore, off-campus instruction may serve a unique clientele.

Although the course content, Arabic, may be the same for both instructional settings, some responses suggest that the learning process and proficiency product differs between the expectations of the students. Both sets of teachers and students must identify, organize, and exploit the positive beliefs held by students about learning a language. Such knowledge of the strength and weaknesses of beliefs may help to determine curriculum design, instructional techniques, lesson sequence, teaching methods and materials, assessment, and even articulation across levels and institutions. In addition, this knowledge of students' beliefs makes it possible for teachers to create a collaborative mode of instruction (AATA, 1998; Al-Batal 1995; Alosh, 1997; Smadi & Al-Abed Al-Haq, 1998) in which students' needs and goals are met as well as those of the government.

With a joint effort by students, teachers, authors, and administrators of language programs, students can improve their language acquisition and be efficient, proficient learners. When Arabic is understandable and relevant to students, instruction and society can foster language retention (Rouchdy, 1992). Then, students of Arabic can become lifelong, culturally-sensitive Arabic speakers.

Notes

1. The author completed two semesters of music theory as a high school student and then took nineteenth century French literature as an undergraduate during the summer.

2. David Werther (UW-Extension) provided this information. He stated that the completion rate for Arabic (24%) was low compared to the 50% rate for other academic courses.

3. In Wisconsin, the state budget provides slightly more funds to the prison system than to public education for all levels. Consequently, educational services in the prison institutions is an expanding option.

4. One of the features of distance education is the fact that the learner is in control. When a survey is distributed to an on-campus class, it is easy for the research/teacher to oversee the completion of surveys. A teacher of a distance-delivered course has limited control over data collection.

5. See the following books for additional suggestions:

Bellanca, J., Chapman, C., & Swartz, E. (1994). *Multiple assessments for multiple intelligences*. Palatine, IL: IRI/Skylight Training & Publishing, Inc.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. New York: Basic Books.

Hanson Silver Strong & Associates (1992 and 1995). *Expanding teaching repertoires through styles and strategies*. Woodbridge, NJ: Silver Strong & Associates.

Oxford, R.L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Silver, H., Strong, R., Perini, M. (1997). Integrating learning styles and multiple intelligences. *Educational Leadership* (September): 22-27.

6. The Administration's bill "The Education Excellence for All Children Act of 1999" Title X seeks a two-language concept (i.e., English and a "foreign" language). See also: "Statement by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley" regarding the Education Excellence Act (19 May 1999).

7. Several students of Arabic enrolled in the correspondence (off-campus) course are recent converts to Islam. They are eager to gain a reading proficiency that will enable them to read the *Qur'an*.

8. Instructors have tried to create listservs for corresponding in Arabic. Unfortunately, most student do not have Arabic fonts for their computers. Therefore, if they attempt to write in Arabic, they must transliterate by using Roman letters. For

beginning students, this transliteration process is quite frustrating.

9. See: Liskin-Gasparro, J.E. (1982). *ETS oral proficiency testing manual*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

10. See books concerning differentiated learning:

Tomlinson, C.A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tomlinson, C.A. (1995). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. (video & guide)

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Hayward, F.M. (1983). The role of foreign languages and area studies. In *L & S Magazine*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

Hayward, F.M. & Beckett, P.A. (1978). *The cost of teaching African languages: Major problems and their national implications*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, African Studies Program.

Horwitz, E.K. (1989). Facing the blackboard: Student perceptions of language learning and the language classroom. *ADEFL Bulletin*, 20/3: 61-64.

Horwitz, E.K. (1988). The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students. *Modern Language Journal*, 72/3: 283-294.

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Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Krashen, S., Scarcella, R.C., & Long, M.H. (1982). *Child-adult differences in second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

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Appendix - A

Textbooks

UW-Madison

331/2 (First Year)

Brustad. K. (1995). *Alif Baa.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Brustad, K. (1995). *AL-Kitab fii Ta'allum* (pt.1) Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Wehr, H. (1994). *Dictionary Modern Written Arabic.* MD: Spoken Language.

UW-Extension

101 (First Semester)

Mansoor, M. (1986). *First semester Arabic.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Extension, Independent Learning. (tape)

102 (Second Semester)

Abboud, P. & McCarus, E. (Eds.). (1983). *Elementary modern standard Arabic* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press (University of Michigan). (tape)

Omer, A.M. (1988). *Second semester Arabic.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Extension, Independent Study.

Appendix - B

Instructors

1986 - present

UW-Madison

A. (M.A./Ph.D. candidate of linguistics, anthropology & "native"-speaker)
(Teaching Assistant)
(National - ? North Africa)
(AY - 1 level, yearly contract)

* Faculty Supervisor *

B. (Ph.D. 1976. *The poetry of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi*. University of California - San Diego)
(AY - 3 levels + compressed video to UW Milwaukee)
(Associate Professor of literature)
(Chair of Dept. of African Languages & Literature, 1985-87)
(Dir. of CASA AY program in Egypt 1980-82)
(Leave - 1975-76; 1980-82, 1987-88, 1996-98)
(Travel - Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Egypt)

UW-Extension

A. (Ph.D. candidate - anthropology)
(CY - 1 level)
(Instructor)
(National - Sudan)

B. (Ph.D. candidate - linguistics)
(CY - 1 level)
(Instructor)
(National - Sudan)

C. (Ph.D. 1996. *University students' beliefs about foreign language learning*. University of Wisconsin - Madison)
(CY - 1 level)
(Instructor)
(Travel - Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt [Oman, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen])

Appendix C

BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING (KRI)

(1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly disagree

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.
4. The language I am trying to learn is:
   Very Difficult Difficult Neutral Easy Very Easy
5. The language (Arabic) I am trying to learn is structured in the same way as English.
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language (Arabic) very well.
7. It is important to speak a foreign language (Arabic) with an excellent accent.
8. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language (Arabic).
9. You should not say anything in the foreign language (Arabic) until you can say it correctly.
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.
11. It is better to learn a foreign language (Arabic) in the foreign country.
12. If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn (Arabic), I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.
13. It is okay to guess if you do not know a word in the foreign language (Arabic).
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language (Arabic), how long would it take him/her to become fluent?
    < yr 1-2 yrs 3-5 yrs 5-10 yrs >> 10 yrs
15. I have a foreign language aptitude.

16. Learning a foreign language (Arabic) is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.

17. It is important to repeat and practice often.

18. I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language (Arabic) in front of other people.

19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.

20. Learning a foreign language (Arabic) is mostly a matter of learning a many of grammar rules.

21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.

22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.

23. If I speak this language (Arabic) very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.

24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language (Arabic).

25. Learning a foreign language (Arabic) is different from learning other school subjects.

26. Learning a foreign language (Arabic) is mostly a matter of translating from English.

27. If I learn to speak this language (Arabic) very well it will help me get a good job.

28. It is easier to read and write this language (Arabic) than to speak and understand it.

29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages (Arabic).

30. U.S. citizens think that it is important to speak a foreign language.

31. I would like to learn this language (Arabic) so that I can get to know its speakers better.

32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.

33. U.S. citizens are good at learning foreign languages.

34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

***

35. In order to read something in a foreign language, you have to know all the words.

36. In order to listen to something in a foreign language, you have to know all the words.

37. It is easier to read and understand (listen) in this language than it is to speak and write in it.

I am interested in studying this language....

38. because I have distant ancestors who spoke this language (Arabic).

39. because it will be helpful to me professionally.

40. because I am interested in the culture of the people(s) who speak this language (Arabic).

41. because I am interested in the politics and/or economics of the country (countries) where this language (Arabic) is spoken.

42. because I need to fulfill a foreign language requirement for graduation.

43. to qualify for a fellowship or some kind of funding for my education.

44. because I have friends or relatives who speak it.

45. because the quality of instruction in this language (Arabic) is excellent.

46. because I plan to travel to a country where this language (Arabic) is spoken.

47. My most important goal in studying this language (Arabic) is to develop the ability:
to read/write (not speak)
to participate in short, simple conversations of an informal nature
to participate in formal discussions
to function as a native speaker and to provide simultaneous interpreting
to understand the culture of the people who speak this language

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